

Division of Safety and Permanence

DSP Numbered Memo Series 2025-24

November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator  
DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Home Providers  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: John Elliott  
Administrator

Re: Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 Foster Home Care for Children Revisions: Ongoing Services Practice Changes



## PURPOSE and BACKGROUND

The purpose of this memo is to communicate areas of changes to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) administrative rule governing foster home licensure, DCF 56, that will be effective December 1, 2025 and will impact child welfare professionals' practice in the provision of ongoing services. To the extent applicable, the changes will also be reflected in the updated version of the DCF Ongoing Services Standards when they are released in the first quarter of 2026.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

Detailed information about the revised Administrative Rule DCF Chapter 56 is provided in [DCF Numbered Memo Series 2025-23 Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 Foster Home Care for Children Revisions](#). Revisions to administrative rule that will require practice changes for child welfare professionals providing ongoing services to a family are as follows:

1. **DCF 56.09(3)(e): Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard: *Foster child's hair***  
revised authorization for hair care services that would significantly change the style, cut, or color of the foster child's hair, now requiring permission from the foster child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian. Foster parents may authorize hair care services needed to maintain the style, cut, and color of the foster child's hair. A foster child 12 years of age or older may make their own decisions about their hair care without obtaining permission from their parent, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian.

2. **DCF 56.185: Agency contact with foster parent and foster child** revised to require that more than 50 percent of agency in-person contacts with a foster child shall be in the foster child's foster home, occurring no less than every other month. If a foster child is placed in a Level 3 or 4 foster home, the licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency shall have contact with the foster parent and foster child as follows:
  - a) With the foster parent, at least 2 in-person contacts per month. At least one of these contacts shall be in the foster home.
  - b) With the foster child, at least one in-person contact every other week. At least one contact per month shall be in the foster home.
  - c) Notwithstanding subd. 2., if a foster child with a level of need below 3 is placed in a Level 3 or 4 foster home, the licensing agency, placing agency, or supervising agency shall have at least one in-person contact with the foster child each full calendar month that the foster child is in the foster home.
  - d) If a child is placed in a Level 5 foster home, agencies shall have at least 2 in-person contacts per month with the foster parent and at least one of these contacts shall be in the foster home.
3. **DCF 56.07(4)** has been revised to require agencies to obtain consent from children in shared sleeping arrangements. More detail is provided in the administrative rule.

## ACTION SUMMARY

Child welfare professionals will need to adhere to all requirements in the revised Administrative Rule DCF Chapter 56.

The department will release updated Ongoing Services Standards in Q1 2026.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Section  
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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>